



Crime Victims
Helpline.ie

Freephone **116006**

Annual Report

2023

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Chairperson's Welcome

It is my pleasure to introduce the 2023 Annual Report of the Crime Victims Helpline (CVH) which gives a comprehensive overview of the organization's many efforts and achievements in 2023.

Over the past year, CVH has continued to be a beacon of hope and support for people who were trying to cope with the traumatic effect of crime and the ongoing aftermath. Our dedicated team of professionals and volunteers has provided unwavering support, ensuring that every victim who contacts us receives compassionate care and guidance at a very distressing time in their lives.

The successes we have achieved would not have been possible without the steadfast support of our volunteers. Their generosity and dedication have empowered us to extend our reach and impact more lives than ever before. On behalf of the Board of Directors, I extend my deepest thanks to each of them for their invaluable contributions.

I also want to acknowledge the dedicated work of our CEO, Michele Puckhaber, and the other staff members who work tirelessly and with empathy on behalf of victims of crime. Michele is an inspirational leader who is passionate about advocating for and supporting victims of crime.

I extend my gratitude also to the directors who served throughout the year. Their commitment, determination and guidance has enabled the organisation to grow from strength to strength. I want to acknowledge the very significant contributions of Eileen Brady and Simon Treanor who retired from the Board in July 2023 and of Naoise Kelly who will retire as a director in July 2024. Collectively, they have given 31 years of dedicated service to CVH for which the organisation is extremely grateful. Three new directors (Margaret Clapham, Naomi Coleman and John Kelly) joined the Board in 2023 and their considerable experience and fresh perspective is and will be a great benefit to CVH.

I am very proud of CVH which is a well-run organisation with strong governance, financial and other controls. The Board and management fully embrace the Charities Governance Code and all other requirements of the Charities Regulator for organisations of our size. We believe that strong and effective corporate governance is critically important to the maintenance of public trust in charities. We also comply fully with the requirements of the Grant Agreement issued by the Department of Justice, and we are very grateful for the funding provided to us.

Unfortunately, there will always be crime and therefore our work will never be done. Victims of crime, their family members, their friends and their associates are entitled to be supported, empowered and informed. With our dedicated staff, volunteers, stakeholders, and Directors working together and with guidance from our patron (retired Judge Gillian Hussey), CVH is well positioned to continuing its support for victims of crime and to enhancing and expanding the services it provides.



Michael Tyndall
Chairperson



Message from the CEO

2023 was another busy year at the Crime Victims Helpline. Our dedicated team of volunteers and staff handled the largest number of service user contacts in CVH's history. The increase in demand for our service highlights the pressing need for accessible, compassionate support for victims of crime across Ireland. Our services, provided over the 116 006 helpline, email, text and web chat, have continued to be a lifeline for countless individuals.

We are committed to providing essential support to victims of crime, raising awareness about their needs, and advocating for policies that ensure their rights and well-being are adequately acknowledged. Vocal survivor and victims' rights activist, Sarah Grace, highlighted in a recent speech that she did not choose her path, it was chosen for her. Amplifying and listening to the voices of victims is vital, but they should not need to shout their trauma in order to secure sufficient support and compensation or ensure meaningful access to their rights. Organisations and professionals in the victim support and criminal justice sectors must continue to tirelessly advocate on behalf of the people we serve.

CVH is an incredible team of individuals who contribute their time, energy and expertise in support of people impacted by crime. Our volunteers provide direct services six days a week and continue to amaze me with their compassion, generosity and resilience. The wisdom and guidance of the Board of Directors allows CVH to maintain compliance with the Charities Regulator Governance Code and company law and overall keep the organisation on sound footing. CVH's dedicated staff are passionate about securing the best possible outcomes for victims through both direct support to service users and through the support they provide to volunteers. I can't thank you all enough.

The Department of Justice under the leadership of Minister McEntee has continued to generously support the work of CVH. The Dormant Accounts Fund provided CVH with the means to launch our webchat services in 2023. I am extremely grateful to both.



Michele Puckhaber
Chief Executive



About the Crime Victims Helpline



✔ Provide meaningful, person-centred support at the point of need

- At Crime Victims Helpline we provide people who have been impacted by crime with the space and time to speak with someone who can offer a listening ear; and we provide information, guidance and signposting to relevant services. Through these supports, we aim to empower people who have been impacted by crime.
- We provide a service which is easy to access, which is free, independent and confidential.
- We simplify and streamline a complex criminal justice system and victim support sector.
- As a service we pride ourselves on providing a responsive person-centred service. As such we are dynamic, flexible and adapt our service to meet the changing nature of the criminal justice system, the changing nature of crime, and the needs of victims.

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Highlights of 2023

Support from Minister McEntee

We were extremely grateful for the vocal support of the Minister for Justice Helen McEntee TD and her team at the Department of Justice during the launch of CVH's 2022 Annual Report.



Statement from Minister McEntee

"I want to thank Michele Puckhaber, CEO and her team of staff and volunteers...From knowing the team and the work that they do, I know that every single person who made contact with them were met with compassion, respect and were listened to when they reached out for help.

The Crime Victims Helpline plays a vital role in supporting victims of crime and is an important partner to The Department of Justice. I look forward to continuing to work with Michele and her team in the year ahead."

"All Victims of Crime"

Awareness Raising Video and Cinema Ad

As the population of Ireland grows and changes, it is vital that the services of CVH are known and available to all. With the guidance of the video production company The Reelists, CVH created a short video featuring our wonderful volunteers, family, and friends that highlights our role in supporting all victims of crime in Ireland. The video played in cinemas across the country in 2023. If you missed it in the cinema, you can view it by clicking on the picture below or by visiting CVH's YouTube Channel.



Highlights of 2023

European Day for Victims of Crime “Safety, Support and Justice for All”

European Day for Victims of Crime is marked each year on the 22nd February. The day is set aside to highlight issues impacting victims and to honour and remember those who have been harmed by crime.

CVH organised the “Safety, Support and Justice for All” Conference to mark the day in 2023. It was a valuable opportunity for people working in the victim support and criminal justice sectors to reflect on our work and broadly consider how we are meeting the needs of victims and ensuring their rights are upheld.

There was an extraordinary line-up of speakers including an opening address from Minister James Browne. We were also honoured and humbled to hear from Ruth Maxwell, a survivor of a brutal kidnapping attempt and now advocate for victims of crime, and Imam Ibrahim Noonan, whose mosque was vandalised in an anti-Muslim attack.

The event also served as the official launch of the CVH webchat service after a successful pilot in 2022.

We are very grateful for everyone who contributed their time and expertise as speakers and panelists, as well as the attendees who took time out of their busy schedules to mark the day.



Highlights of 2023

Dublin Pride Parade

The Crime Victims Helpline participated once again in the Dublin Pride Parade. Marching with the “We Act” coalition, it was an important opportunity to show our support to the LGBTQ community. CVH has seen an alarming 314% increase in the number of people contacting us about LGBTQ hate crime over the past four years (albeit from a low starting number).

Being present at events such as Pride raises awareness of CVH’s services and lets the community know we are a resource and support for all victims of crime.



National Ploughing Championships

CVH was invited by the Department of Justice and the Garda National Victim Liaison Unit to exhibit at the National Ploughing Championship. As a stop on the “Victim’s Journey”, CVH was able to connect with a huge number of people over the course of the three-day event. Many people wanted to learn more about the services provided by CVH, while others wanted to share their experiences or their views on crime in their community. It was also a chance to connect with colleagues from across the criminal justice system and form important working relationships.



2023 in Numbers

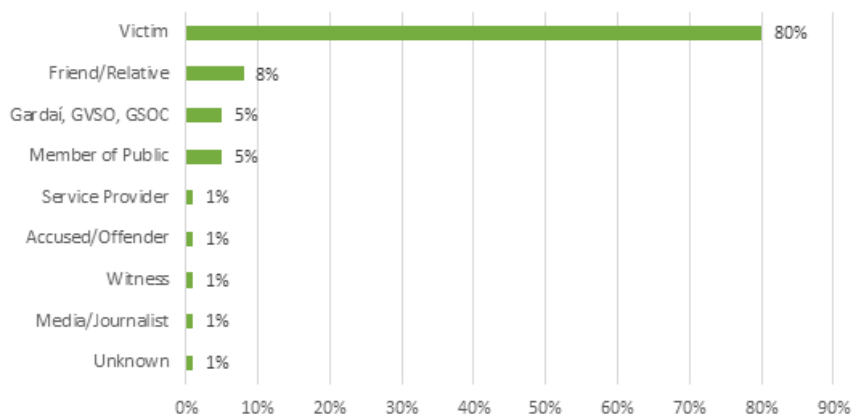
In 2023, CVH recorded 6,507 contacts. Compared to 2022, the number of incoming calls increased by 15% and incoming emails increased by 43%. Overall, contacts have increased 10% from the previous year. This reflects the steady increase in the use of CVH services over the years as contacts have increased an astounding 58% since 2016 when our current record keeping system was put in place.

Maintaining the quality of the services provided by CVH has been a priority over this period of growth. Starting with just one full-time and one part-time staff member, with the support of the Department of Justice, a full-time Service Coordinator was added in 2022. The previously part-time role evolved into a full-time Volunteer Coordinator position in 2024. Staff provide direct service, primarily over email, text and webchat, and support the team of approximately 25 volunteers who answer the helpline.

Contacts by Type	
Phone	4576
Email	1200
Text	597
Webchat	70
Post	64

The majority of CVH users (70%) contacted us via our freephone number 116 006. In an effort to keep pace with increased demand, additional evening hours were added to the helpline on Monday and Thursday evenings. Emails (including those sent through the CVH website) were the second most popular means of contact at 18%, followed by texts at 9%. CVH will always strive to be as accessible as possible so that victims can communicate with us in whatever way they are most comfortable.

The majority of contacts (80%) came directly from victims of crime. 8% came from a friend or relative, 5% from Garda Victim Service Offices, Gardaí or GSOC, and 5% from members of the public.



CVH records the gender of the person contacting us if they self-identify but we do not generally ask for this information. An exception to this is in relation to domestic violence, where separate services exist for men and women. In 2023, 51% of service users were identified as female while 49% were identified as male.

While service users usually contact CVH in relation to a number of issues, just one primary purpose of contact is recorded. In 2023, 22% of contacts pertained to Emotional Support, 32% pertained to information regarding the criminal justice system, while 26% constituted a follow-up (namely further contacts made to service users who request it). 15% of contacts sought referrals to or information about other services.

As in previous years, assault and harassment were the two main types of crime that CVH was contacted about in 2023. There were 734 contacts relating to harassment and 646 contacts related to assault in 2023.

Contacts relating to fraud both in-person and online also continued to increase in 2023. In 2023, there were 201 contacts relating to fraud online and 165 relating to fraud in-person, compared to 172 and 100 in 2022, and 86 and 82 respectively in 2021.

Contacts to CVH relating to the non-consensual sharing of intimate images continued to increase in 2023. There were 187 contacts pertaining to this type of crime in 2023 compared to 109 in 2022 and 29 in 2021.

Notably, 2023 witnessed a significant increase in contacts relating to the crime of extortion/blackmail (the majority of contacts relating specifically to “sextortion”). There were 197 contacts pertaining to this type of crime in 2023 compared to 69 in 2022 and 24 in 2021.

Contacts to CVH related to LGBTQ hate crimes saw a substantial increase over the past three years (albeit from a low starting figure). There was a 78% increase from 2021 to 2022 and a further 81% increase from 2022 to 2023, indicating a concerning upward trend. The chart below shows how many of the recorded crimes were related to domestic abuse or other forms of hate crime.

Motivation	
Domestic abuse	170
LGBTQ Hate Crime	29
Racist Hate Crime	15

Accessibility

Interpreter services for anyone who would like to speak on the helpline in a language other than English are available on-demand from 10am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. The service is provided by global company LanguageLine. Using a service such as LanguageLine overcomes many of the dangers of using local translators especially for less common languages where the chances would be high that the service user and translator are known to one another. In addition, CVH has volunteers who can provide services directly in multiple languages.

Type of crime	Number of contacts
Harassment	734
Assault	646
Fraud	366
Blackmail/Extortion	197
Non-Consensual Sharing of Intimate Photos	187
Rape/Sexual Assault	138
Criminal Damage	123
Threats to Harm/Kill	116
Theft	80
Burglary	79
Coercive Control	68
Hacking/Data Protection Breach	67
Stalking	56
Antisocial Behaviour	55
Robbery	54
Road Traffic Incident	49
Child Abuse (Historic)	40
Vehicle Theft	36
Child Abuse (Recent)	20
Homicide	13
Arson	9
Abduction	9
Trespassing	9
Violation Safety/Barring Order	6
Human Trafficking	3
Manslaughter	1

CVH is a national helpline, and it is a priority that we are known across the Republic of Ireland. In line with previous years, the percentage of CVH contacts was mostly proportionate to the population distribution across the country. For instance, contacts from callers who noted that they were based in either Dublin or Cork constituted 47% of the callers who disclosed their location.

It is also worth noting that 5% of CVH contacts that disclosed where they were based came from international locations. A portion of international contacts are from people who were victims of crime in Ireland and are now living elsewhere or similarly, the victim is living elsewhere and the perpetrator of the crime in question (often fraud) is Irish or living in Ireland.

County	Percentage of CVH contacts	Percentage of ROI Population (2022 census)
Dublin	41%	28%
Cork	6%	11%
Meath	4%	4%
Galway	4%	5%
Louth	4%	3%
Kildare	3%	5%
Mayo	3%	3%
Tipperary	3%	3%
Limerick	3%	4%
Wexford	3%	3%
Kerry	2%	3%
Wicklow	2%	3%
Westmeath	2%	2%
Waterford	2%	2.5%
Donegal	2%	3%
Clare	2%	2.5%
Kilkenny	1%	2%
Laois	1%	2%
Cavan	1%	2%
Sligo	1%	1.5%
Roscommon	1%	1.5%
Monaghan	1%	1.5%
Offaly	1%	1.5%
Carlow	1%	1%
Leitrim	1%	1%
Longford	1%	1%

In 2023, CVH made over 3,000 referrals to a large variety of different organisations, supports and resources. This reflects the wide-ranging needs of people who are harmed by crime. As we have seen in previous years, the vast majority of referrals were made to the Gardaí and Garda Victim Service Offices. CVH provides training, education, and updates on an ongoing basis to staff members and volunteers. This ensures that our team remains well-informed about the diverse resources and supports that may be of benefit to our service users.

Referrals Made	
Gardaí	834
Garda Victim Service Offices	613
Counselling	440
Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)	295
Hotline.ie	184
Counselling In Primary Care Scheme	93
Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal (CICT)	72
Garda Ombudsman (GSOC)	69
GP	67
Domestic Abuse National Helpline (Women's Aid)	49
Social Media Platforms	46
Support After Crime	33
Data Protection Commission	32
Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)	31
Victim Support at Court (VSAC)	30
Doras	25
Rape Crisis National Helpline (DRC)	24
Samaritans	23
Residential Tenancies Board	23
Immigrant Council of Ireland	21
Threshold	20
St Vincent DePaul	20
Dept of Employment Affairs and Social Protection	20
Childline/Teenline	19
Citizens Information	18
Sexual Violence Centre Cork (Stalking)	16
INAR/iReport	13
Pieta House	13
Parentline	12
One in Four	12
Men's Aid	11
Competition and Consumer Protection Commission	11
International Victim Support/Police	10
Workplace Relations Commission	7
Fraudsmart.ie	6
Crisis Text Line	6
Care After Prison	6
Irish Prison Service	6
Accompaniment Support Service for Children	6
Advic (Advocates for Victims of Homicide)	5
Connect	5
Support After Homicide	5
Sage Advocacy	4
Court Service	4
Tourist SOS (formerly ITAS)	4
CARI	3
Senior Alert Scheme	2
Legal Aid Board	2
Male Advice Line	1
Parole Board	1

2023 Finances

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023 €	2022 €
Current assets		
Debtors: amounts falling due within one year	1,284	787
Cash at bank and in hand	25,045	39,229
	<u>26,329</u>	<u>40,016</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(11,300)	(16,891)
Net current assets	<u>15,029</u>	<u>23,125</u>
Total assets less current liabilities	<u>15,029</u>	<u>23,125</u>
Deferred Income		(7,766)
Net assets	<u>15,029</u>	<u>15,359</u>
Reserves		
Income & expenditure account	<u>15,029</u>	15,359
Members' funds	<u>15,029</u>	15,359

SCHEDULE TO THE DETAILED ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	2023 €	2022 €
Income		
Grant Income	157,500	150,000
Donations & other	82	3,007
Deferred income	7,766	2,087
Benevict Project	-	6,895
	<u>165,348</u>	<u>161,989</u>
	2023 €	2022 €
Administration expenses		
Staff salaries	106,503	96,190
Employer's social insurance contributions	11,233	10,082
Employer's contributions to staff pensions	3,293	2,560
Awareness Raising	11,163	18,291
Bank charges	171	174
Computer costs	3,542	5,024
Conference & meetings	654	1,109
General office expenses	2,965	2,421
Insurances	1,394	1,411
Interpretation & Translation	18	188
Legal and professional	852	320
Postage	452	502
Sundry expenses	233	114
Telephone	11,226	10,951
Training and memberships	1,747	2,777
Travel and subsistence	466	870
Auditors' remuneration	2,000	1,845
Dormant Fund Projects	7,766	2,087
Strategic Plan	-	9,779
	<u>165,678</u>	<u>166,695</u>

Board of Directors

Crime Victims Helpline is committed to having the highest standards of good governance. Directors are independently elected and no Director receives any remuneration whatsoever for their service.

The trust and support of the community are not something that we take for granted. Any queries in relation to the governance of Crime Victims Helpline can be directed to info@crimevictimshelpline.ie

Michael Tyndall, Chairperson
Eileen Brady (resigned 2023)
Clare Cresswell
Margaret Clapham (appointed 2023)
Naomi Coleman (appointed 2023)
Declan Harrington
John Kelly (appointed 2023)
Naoise Kelly
Susan Leahy
Simon Treanor (resigned 2023)

Staff

Michele Puckhaber
Chief Executive

Caoimhe McKeon
Service Coordinator

Marie Murray/Rebecca Fitzmaurice (Job Share)
Volunteer Coordinator

Chloe Leech
Helpline Support Worker (Relief)

Charity and Company Information

Crime Victims Helpline is a registered charity
16894 (CRO)
20061890 (Charities Regulator)

Company Limited by Guarantee 409235

Registered Office
6/7 Hanover Street East, D02 W320

The Crime Victims Helpline is supported by



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Department of Justice



ciste na
gcuntas díomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund